

# Christmas According To Genesis

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## Noah

This is our third message in the series working our way through the book of Genesis. In this series, we're considering how the book of Genesis helps inform our understanding of who Jesus would be and what he would do. That should also, then, have the effect of deepening our celebration of Christmas and expanding our worship during this very special time of year. To date we have considered how Jesus is the second Adam, as Paul calls him, who succeeded where the first Adam failed because he was obedient where the first Adam was rebellious. We have also considered how Jesus was the promised seed of Eve, whom God prophesied would destroy the serpent in battle. Today we're going to talk about Noah, whose story is recorded in Genesis 6-9.

However, before we do that, it's important to pick up the story of Genesis where we left off because without that, the flood makes less sense. After God curses Adam and Eve and the serpent in Genesis 3, life went on in Genesis 4. However, only then do we begin to see the depth and breadth of sin's effects. In Genesis 4, Adam and Eve gave birth to Cain and Able. Before that chapter is done, Cain has killed Abel and we see the seeds of violence that will eventually fill the earth with its bloody fruit. A few generations later, Lamech is born. Lamech is worse than Cain. He not only murders as his ancestor Cain had, but boasts about murdering someone who only injured him. In Genesis 5, then, we read the genealogy of Adam, which among other things, informs us of fruitfulness of Adam's line. But it was, for the most part, bad fruit.

## Noah

Genesis 6:5-7 says, "5The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. 6The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. 7So the LORD said, 'I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth—men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air—for I am grieved that I have made them.'"

It's understandable why God would determine to wipe out mankind. Life had become cheap and the image of God in his highest creation was regularly degraded and destroyed through violence and murder. But God's decision to destroy every living thing leaves us with a big problem. What about the promise He made that one of Eve's descendants would defeat the serpent and defeat his plans for the ultimate destruction of human beings? If God destroyed everyone, his promise would come to nothing. That's when we read Genesis 6:8: "But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord."

So let's talk about Noah for a moment. Genesis 6:9-10 says, "9This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. 10Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth." Genesis 6:9 first says that Noah was a righteous man. What does that mean? Well, it doesn't mean he was sinless man. It means that Noah trusted God and demonstrated that trust through obedience. That's exactly what Hebrews 11:7 says. "By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith." Noah was righteous by faith, as were all of the Old Testament saints, most notably Abraham.

Genesis 6:9 also says that Noah was "blameless among the people of his time." What does that mean? Well, it doesn't mean he was sinless or perfect, but that he was morally upright in spite of a culture that was thoroughly crooked and depraved. Those around him could not impugn his

character. Not only so, but like Enoch, Noah "walked with God." Maybe the best way to think about that is in terms of the intimacy Noah enjoyed with God. In fact, the phrase to walk with God harkens back to the Garden of Eden, where Genesis 3:8 says that Adam and Eve, "heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day." Noah was a man of tremendous character, courage, and piety.

## Judgment

Because Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord, the Lord provided a means of salvation for him and his family: a boat. A really big boat, in fact. Genesis 6:13-14 says, "13And God said to Noah, 'I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. 14Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch.'" God intended to destroy the world through a flood and so he gave Noah the plans for a boat that would sustain him, his family, and select animals. The author makes it clear that Noah obeyed everything the Lord commanded him to and as such, God spared him and those with him.

So Noah entered the ark with his family and the animals (Genesis 7:1-9). In Genesis 7:10-11 the flood waters came on the earth, and for forty days it rained until even the mountains were covered (Genesis 7:19). As such, Genesis 7:23 says, "Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; men and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds of the air were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark." The flood waters covered the earth for 150 days, but then Genesis 8:1 says, "But God remembered Noah...and he sent a wind over the earth, and the waters receded." After 150 days, the waters had gone down enough that Noah made plans to disembark the boat.

Genesis 8:15-17 reads, "15Then God said to Noah, '16Come out of the ark, you and your wife and your sons and their wives. 17Bring out every kind of living creature that is with you—the birds,

the animals, and all the creatures that move along the ground—so they can multiply on the earth and be fruitful and increase in number upon it."

Genesis 8:20-21 says, "20Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. 21The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: 'Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done.' And of course, God uses the rainbow as the symbol of that promise.

## Remnant

Before we circle around to Jesus, I want to spend just a minute talking about judgment and renewal. It's important to note the purpose of God's judgment and how Noah functions within it. In judging the world, it says God blotted out, or wiped out mankind, from the earth because they had filled it with violence and murder. In other words, God's judgment was not simply to punish wickedness, but to make a new beginning—to start over. God's judgment represents as much of a beginning as it does an ending. What part does Noah play in that? Well, Noah and his family are what we call a remnant. They are a small group of righteous people with whom God would renew his covenant and make a new beginning of things. Noah is the new Adam if you will. From his family would come not only the nations, but the line through which the seed of Eve would be born to crush the head of the serpent.

Even after Noah, Scripture reports numerous times where God steps in and judges wickedness, raises up a remnant, and begins again. God judges Babel by confusing their languages (Genesis 11). God judges Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19). God judges the Israelites in the wilderness, allowing a whole generation of people to die without entering the promised land, but bringing a remnant into the that land (Numbers 14). God judges Israel by deporting much of its population to Assyria, and likewise much of the population of Judah to Babylon. Yet in none of these judgments did God completely destroy his people or cut off

the line that would ultimately lead to the seed of Eve being born. That leads us to Jesus.

## Jesus

Luke's genealogy directly connects Jesus to back to Adam through Noah (Luke 3:36) and thus shows how God preserved the line of Eve and the fulfilled his promise to defeat the serpent in battle. But not only is Noah one of Jesus' ancestors, he is a type or picture of who Jesus would be and how he would save his people from their sins. While Noah and his family were a remnant God used to make a new beginning, that new beginning did not last long. In fact, the story of Noah ends on a dismal note in which Noah plants a vineyard, gets drunk on its wine, and passes out at which time he is assaulted by his youngest son Japheth.

However, Jesus is the better Noah. Jesus is the remnant of one. He was perfectly righteous and upright and enjoyed perfect intimacy with God. Rather than escaping God's judgment, he endured its clearest and fiercest expression on the cross. He became sin for us so that we might be the righteousness of God (2Corinthians 5:21). Rather than preserving the line of Eve through his own descendants, Jesus created a whole new line of spiritual descendants, those who had been born again, "not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God (John 1:13)." So what do we make of all of this?

## Conclusions

First, let me say a word about judgment. Humans sometimes condemn God's judgment of the world through Noah or in some other passage and here's why: because we have all tasted the intoxicating delicacy of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil and have heard the ancient whisper of the serpent in our ear, "Did God really say? Was God really justified in this or that?" And so having eaten the fruit, we feel justified in defining right and wrong for ourselves and from our perspective. Jesus didn't suffer from that same disease. Instead of making his own way and doing his own thing and standing in judgment over God and his commands, he trusted in God's goodness, righteousness, and justice and he fully obeyed the will of the Father.

In that regard, Jesus was the remnant of one. Just a moment's reflection would make it clear that no human person or institution has the moral authority to stand in judgment over God—not Hollywood, academia, government, non-profit, philanthropic endeavors, or the church.

Second, then, the real question is not whether God is justified in punishing human wickedness, but why he didn't destroy the whole lot of us. Why promise to defeat Satan? Why preserve humanity through Noah? Why protect the lineage of Jesus when all along the way our world has been filled with violence and oppression? And even more, why would Jesus, who was co-eternal with the Father and the one through whom all things were made—why would he empty himself and take the form of a man and suffer with us and for us in order to free us from the devastating consequences of our own sin?

The answer to that question is found in the message that the angel and the heavenly hosts proclaimed to the shepherds. Luke 2:8-14 says, "8And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. 12This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.' 13Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, '14Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests (Luke 2:13-14)." God sent a second Adam and preserved the line of Eve and spared the life of Noah in order to send his son as a baby, who would grow up to suffer for the sins of mankind, upon "whom his favor rests." All of these things are the result of God's grace.

## Application

Our hope this time of year is not that Jesus was sent to show us how to live. In our sin, we could never hope to live up to his example. Our hope is

not that Jesus would give us the nudge we need to make it over the line. Our hope is not that Jesus came to establish yet another earthly kingdom that would end up acting like the other kingdoms of the world. Our hope is that, like Noah, God sent Jesus to make a whole new start of things, that through his coming we could be born again, we could start over, that our sins would be removed from us as far as the east is from the west, that we could be adopted into God's family and made to be a part of the kingdom that will never end.

If you've accepted God's gracious gift that comes to us through the birth of Christ, then rejoice and worship the Lord and let your heart be filled with hope. If you have never accepted that gift, it's very simple. All you need is nothing. No self-reliance. No negotiations. No excuses. Just a trust in God's goodness and the hope we receive through Christ.

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